

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2999

INFO AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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UNCLAS BRUSSELS 00690

LONDON FOR RCAA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR BE

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: PRESS COVERAGE OF BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS

REF: BRUSSELS 453

1. RESULTS OF JAN. 15-17 ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS WIDELY REPORTED IN BELGIAN PRESS, APPARENTLY ON BASIS OF BACKGROUND PRESS BRIEFING BY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION VANDERPERREN, WHO HEADED BELGIAN DELEGATION. ARTICLES ALL REPORT THAT FIRST ROUND OF TALKS WAS INCONCLUSIVE, UNDER HEADLINES SUCH AS "US AIRLINE DEMANDS UNACCEPTABLE-- SABENA MORE RATIONAL THAN PAN AM" (DE STANDAARD); "SABENA DOES NOT YIELD TO US PRESSURE" (HET LAATSTE NIEUWS); "AMERICAN THREAT AGAINST SABENA" (LE SOIR); AND "A 'SLIGHT DIFFERENCE' IN VIEWPOINTS" (LA LIBRE BELGIQUE).

2. ARTICLE IN LA LIBRE BELGIQUE OF JAN. 21 PROVIDES MOST COMPLETE COVERAGE OF BELGIAN VIEWS. SUMMARY TRANSLATION FOLLOWS:

BEGIN TEXT: THE AMERICAN DEMANDS ARE NOT IN FACT VERY CLEAR, EXCEPT AS TO THEIR PRACTICAL EFFECTS; THE EUROPEANS SHOULD SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE THEIR TRANSPORT CAPACITY ON THE

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NORTH ATLANTIC, TO THE ADVANTAGE OF PANAM AND TWA. TO SUPPORT

THEIR DEMAND, THE AMERICAN NEGOTIATORS ASSERT THAT THE BELGIAN CARRIERS CARRY TOO MANY PASSENGERS FROM OUTSIDE THEIR "NORMAL" MARKET. BASED ON TECHNICAL CALCULATIONS THAT THEY PROPOSE, BELGIUM SHOULD REDUCE ITS NORTH ATLANTIC TRAFFIC BY 40 TO 50 PERCENT, APPARENTLY WITHOUT ANY COUNTERPART BUT THE SATISFACTION OF ASSURING THE "FAIR AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY" FORESEEN BY THE AVIATION AGREEMENT.

BELGIUM, IT SEEMS, HAS NO INTENTION OF GIVING IN TO SUCH VAGUE ARGUMENTS BY THE AMERICANS. WE HAVE SEVERAL COUNTER-ARGUMENTS: CONCERNING "FAIR AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY," WE CAN MAKE USE OF THE FACT THAT SABENA IS THE ONLY CARRIER WITH RIGHTS TO ONLY ONE LANDING POINT IN THE US. OUR COUNTRY IN ADDITION CAN ASSERT THAT IT IS ABOVE ALL IN CHARTER BUSINESS THAT THE DECLINE IN TRAFFIC MAKES ITSELF FELT; SCHEDULED TRAFFIC SHOWS LITTLE TENDENCY TO DROP. AND IT IS TRUE THAT THE MAJORITY OF CHARTER LINES ARE AMERICAN.

IN REALITY, SINCE MID-'74 SABENA HAS REDUCED ITS PASSENGER CAPACITY ON THE NORTH ATLANTIC BY 27 PERCENT, LESS TO RESPOND TO AN AMERICAN REQUEST THAN TO ADAPT ITSELF TO CONDITIONS. TO ASK BELGIUM TO FURTHER REDUCE SUBSTANTIALLY ITS TRAFFIC WOULD BE TO CONDEMN IT TO FALL BELOW THE FLOOR OF VIABILITY. ONE HAS IN EFFECT THE IMPRESSION THAT THE US WISHES TO EXPORT TO EUROPE THE DIFFICULTIES OF ITS COMPANIES. END TEXT.RENNER

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